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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the need for and importance of field-based experiences in the training of prospective second language teachers prior to student teaching. Several types of field-based experiences are described: (1) experiences actually based on schools, including observation and participation; (2) teaching experiences based on the college or university campus with high school pupils or college students; (3) introduction to classroom experience through the use of videotape recordings, and (4) practice-teaching programs in other countries. Sixteen characteristics of an effective program for training second-language teachers are described, and the need for more research in the area of second language field-based experiences is emphasized. (PMP)

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PRE-STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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Experiences offered to prospective teachers of second languages prior to student teaching range from one or two school visits during a methods class to extensive microteaching and observation periods in schools. These experiences have been dictated in part by the facilities and budget of the teacher-preparing institution and in part by the extent of cooperation with public schools in the community in which the institution is located.

It has become clear to teacher educators that students preparing to become second language teachers in American classrooms need to become aware of what happens in those classrooms before they begin student teaching. In some states (e.g., Pennsylvania) a four-phase program is suggested in which students work first with children in a nonschool activity, then take part in tutorial experience, small-group work, and full-year internship experiences.

At the present time, public schools are taking more responsibility for the training of teachers. While one can only applaud the closer contact between prospective teachers and these schools, complete reliance on the public schools to train teachers can result in perpetuation of a not-always-exemplary status quo in language teaching. The language-teaching profession is changing, often faster than teachers in many schools are changing, as a result of growing pressure for relevance and "holding" students. The fact is that many teachers today continue to perpetuate an elitism which assumes that if a student does not care about learning language facts, studying grammar, and immersing himself in the literature of a people, he needn't study the language. Such an attitude is, unfortunately, often encouraged by professional language-teaching associations.

The foregoing is not intended to imply that public schools cannot train language teachers. It is simply a warning that many teacher educators overstate the case when they say that <u>any</u> public school language teacher is <u>guaranteed</u> to do a better job than the teacher-training institutions.

On the other hand, methods instructors and psychologists are very often far removed from secondary-school classrooms. Indeed, some have never taught in such schools at all. For this reason, their views on teacher training tend to be overly theoretical. They are more apt, however, to have the time and facilities to keep abreast of what is happening in the profession.

It is obvious that a partnership of schools and teacher-training institutions is necessary to provide prospective teachers with the theory and practical experiences they need. Inservice programs can help coordinate the two aspects; inservice teachers can work with prospective teachers on campus, and prospective teachers can be sent to work and observe in schools. Inservice teachers can be awarded graduate credit for working with prospective teachers, and both types of teachers can enroll in some of the same courses. Some possibilities for such cooperation will be explored later.

It is generally agreed by trainers of language teachers that experiences in schools and with teaching are necessary earlier in the prospective teacher's program than the usually-mandated student-teaching phase. Some argue for providing such experiences as soon as the student enters the education program, or even before. The term "field-based experiences" will be used in this paper to describe any such school or teaching experiences which precede student teaching.

Rationale for Field-Based Experiences

It is a fact of educational life that people enter teaching for a variety of stated or unstated reasons: a desire to help pupils learn about an exciting, challenging world, the need for "something to fall back on when the children have grown," or a supplementary income. Others are of the opinion that if another chosen career fails to materialize, they "can always teach!"

We hope that the students are in our classes for altruistic reasons; however, we can never be absolutely certain that all of the individuals in our methods classes should be language teachers. We have no way of knowing, for example, how many of them have seriously considered what a language teacher is. We wonder how many students major in languages and enter teaching because French was their best subject (i.e., they got more A's in French than in other courses). Many such persons become French majors because they love grammar, or love literature, but are unaware of the fact that the very love of grammar or literature may militate against their becoming teachers. Language study is usually suggested for all secondary-school students today, not just for an elite few. The teacher training institution's job is to find out whether prospective teacher "X," who loves literature and grammar, can fit into the real public junior high school situation--where students are, for the most part, not yet interested in these aspects.

One means used in the selection process is provision for an intensive exposure to students in a public school setting or actual teaching of language skills in other settings at the beginning of work in education. The prospective teacher can thus discover whether he really wishes to become a language teacher. Colleges of education have few other screening devices at their disposal for counseling students. Provision of such an experience

at the beginning of one's undergraduate study allows the student to change his major without delaying his graduation. While it is usually obvious at an early stage which candidates are unsuitable, it is extremely difficult to tell a student who expects to graduate two months hence that he should prepare himself for a different career!

A pre-student teaching field-based experience can relieve the anxiety of the prospective language teacher who otherwise might not enter a classroom for the first time until his student teaching begins. It allows him an opportunity to break in gradually, to become accustomed to pupils and schools in a nonthreatening situation where he is not asked to assume complete responsibility for a classroom or a group of pupils. Without such an experience, the actual student teaching placement, which comes much later in his program, can create a trauma which the student finds very difficult, if not impossible, to overcome.

Furthermore, a field-based experience early in the student's career helps give him an awareness of the role of language teaching in the total school curriculum in today's elementary or secondary schools. He can reshape his own approach to the study of language as he continues his education. He can see, for example, that his own background may be deficient in terms of the culture of the country whose language he is preparing to teach; he may discover that he really knows little about the real-life world of the French teenager. As a result he may redirect his course work or plan to live in France for a period of time before continuing his teacher preparation program.

Providing for a systematic, long-range, school-based experience also allows the student to focus as an impartial observer on such processes as interaction, group dynamics, and adolescent peer relationships. If he waits for his student teaching program to examine these processes, he is less likely to do so, since he will be more concerned at that time with lesson preparation, teaching techniques, and his own "performance." In the observation phase, the student may work with a complicated observation system such as Moskowitz's FLINT or use a simplified system of his own to look at such things as teacher-pupil interaction, pupil-pupil interaction, use of English-target language in the classroom, and the extent of real communication in the target language.

A field-based experience can allow the student to get a systematic introduction to the school and its relationship to the community which it serves. Assignments asking him to go into the community to examine other agencies which serve the pupils and their families, the interaction of the school and other community agencies in suburbs and in inner-city situations can be most instructive. Again, the student is less likely to have the time to carry out such activities when he is involved in a full-time student teaching experience.

An additional advantage of this technique is that the student can become aware of how a school operates, so that he can make full use of its services when he actually student-teaches. He can explore the collection in the school library, noting the kind and number of foreign-language books it has, the foreign newspapers and magazines available, and the extent and types of books in English about the foreign country or its people. He can find out what services the guidance department offers to pupils and how it interacts with social workers, psychologists, and other types of social welfare and mental health agencies. He can discover the kinds of health services available to pupils, study the hierarchy of administrative organization, find out how the school board operates in the community, and discover the services of the audiovisual or media service departments. Familiarity with school services can help him ask the right questions when he applies for and is interviewed for his first and subsequent teaching positions.

Field-based experiences can also prepare the student for human relations activities in which he might be engaged in other classes. For certification or recertification in Minnesota, for example, all teachers and prospective teachers must have 60 hours of human relations training dealing with minority students in the schools, working with group process skills, and practicing with interpersonal communication exercises. Such activities can be taught in isolation, but the student never is forced to see such activities as a realistic part of work in a classroom. Field-basing such experiences in a variety of settings, however, can help the student develop his skills in real-life situations, where they are bound to have more meaning.

A variety of experiences based in schools or in teaching situations can give a practical base on which the student can build a philosophy of teaching. Theoretical or cognitive knowledge about the teaching/learning process can be more readily assimilated if the student has an immediate frame of reference against which to view theoretical or cognitive concerns.

Additionally, a field-based experience can provide a sustained period for self-analysis and diagnosis of the student's strengths and weaknesses as he continues preparation for teaching. It can also give him a point of reference for personal growth in positive attitudes toward pupils and the teaching/learning process later in his career.

Finally, a successful (or a number of successful) field-based experience(s) can make possible a smoother transition to the student teaching phase. The student can begin this phase with a feeling of confidence and challenge rather than with the frustration of not knowing what to expect and abject fear of pupils, of schools, of cooperating teachers, and, worst of all, of making mistakes.

Possible Field-Based Experiences

Three types of field-based experiences will be discussed: (1) experiences actually based in schools, including observation and participation; (2) teaching experiences based on the college or university campus with high school pupils or college students; and (3) other bases.

1. Experiences based in schools. Students may be placed in schools as soon as they state that they wish to enter an education program. Such placements are typically made as part of an "Introduction to Education" course which includes both a school-based and a campus-based component. The student may spend from ten to 60 hours during a quarter or semester in the school. He or the course instructor may be responsible for setting up his placement. While in school, the student may be observed and guided several times by a campus supervisor or his course instructor, or he may be left on his own or in the hands of a cooperating teacher without coordination with campus work.

Because of the wide range of possibilities in this category, it is apparent that the quality of such a program, can range from exceptional to spotty, depending on the supervision given to the student by the participating school and by the campus representatives.

The "para-teaching" program at the University of Illinois places students in an Urbana public school as early as their sophomore year in conjunction with on-campus group meetings. Students spend one hour weekly in an elementary, junior high, or senior high classroom (students visit all levels before selecting a level in which to remain for the semester). There they engage in individual tutoring or small-group drill and discussion, prepare review and quiz materials, grade papers, and present some cultural units.

The program is shaped by an initial meeting attended by all prospective para-teachers and cooperating teachers. At this meeting the Urbana foreign language program is described, and instructional goals for each level are outlined. During the semester each student prepares and presents in the classroom an individual project chosen with the approval of the cooperating teacher. He also prepares a bibliography of books on language methods and selects one book from the list for presentation to his on-campus class.

While providing an introduction to the schools, such a para-teaching semester is also a cogent example of the extent to which a field-based experience can be used to help a prospective teacher settle on a career choice. He is introduced to all aspects of a language-teaching career immediately so that he can choose to enter or not enter the profession on the basis of concrete information.

A para-teaching experience might be followed by further periods of work in schools, giving the student experiences with nonlanguage classes as well as with all aspects of language teaching, culminating

in a full-time student teaching experience. The extent to which the student can meet the goals of field-based experience outlined earlier is questionable if he spends only one hour per week in a classroom.

As mentioned previously, the nature and extent of supervision provided for the student after he is placed in a school can greatly influence whether such experiences are successful, and whether the student is simply observing or participating in the classroom in which he is placed. The experiences should be monitored by the education instructor under whose tutelage the student is placed, and a followup session on campus should be provided. The tie between campus and school can be closer, obviously, if there is frequent communication between supervisors of both programs. In this way, the student can be held accountable for follow-up school-based classroom activities based directly on what is going on in the campus course. Such supervision is especially vital if the off-campus work is used to field-base human relations activities. Without close coordination, the extent to which there is direct follow-up of suggested activities cannot be known, and progress cannot be measured.

Without careful supervision, the student is less likely to be able to decide whether he wishes to enter the profession. Part of the work of the off-campus supervisor must be to help the student evaluate the extent to which he is flexible and adaptable enough to be a successful teacher. Such supervision is most effective if the conferences are nondirective and supportive. All too often we tell students to be open to varying pupil opinions and beliefs, while supervisors demonstrate "closed" attitudes toward their own students. There should, therefore, be many such questions as "How did you feel about . . . ?" "What do you think about . . . ?"

Another factor which is extremely important to the success of field-based experiences is the selection of the teacher with whom the prospective teacher will be placed. Ineffective teachers, those who are not committed to the training of teachers, or those who are too busy to devote adequate time and energy to the task, will not educate the students. It is important that the teacher-preparing institutions place students with teachers who are committed to their profession and skilled in warm interpersonal relationships. Further, if prospective teachers are to do more than perpetuate the status quo, the cooperating teacher and the school should be open to innovation.

The experiences of the pre-student teacher should be in as varied a number of settings as possible: elementary and secondary schools; inner-city, suburban, and small-town schools; large and small schools; traditionally and modular-scheduled schools; traditional, open, and free schools.

2. Experiences based on the college or university campus. Non-school-based field experiences are included in this discussion because they form such an important part of pre-student teaching experiences today. Such experiences are of two principal types: (1) microteaching, either with small groups of pupils or with peers; and (2) bit teaching, tutoring, or working with small groups of students in college-level language classrooms.

A. Microteaching and related experiences. Microteaching involves a reduction in the size of the classroom components: the nature and length of the lesson, and the number of students. It involves the teaching of a lesson whose objective is limited to a very small, specific task; the lesson is usually very short (from two to ten minutes). In actual microteaching, the lesson is taught to a group of pupils who may be actual secondary pupils. In a situation sometimes referred to as "simulation," the pupils may be peers of the teacher. Lessons are usually videotaped, revieved and critiqued, and finally replanned and retaught if necessary. Microteaching and simulation are becoming more and more commonplace in the training of prospective second language teachers, although such experiences do not always follow the above description. In this discussion, the term "microteaching" will be used to refer to both microteaching and simulation.

It has been reported that microteaching within a school setting can give prospective teachers more classroom-like experiences earlier than the normal student teaching at the end of their undergraduate careers. The experience, coupled with team-teaching in actual school situations, helps to decrease anxiety and improve the confidence of prospective teachers.

Following their student teaching later in the year, students at Ohio State University who had undergone a microteaching program in the local schools rated it the most valuable of all undergraduate experiences, including student teaching.

Prospective language teachers at the University of Minnesota have been involved in microteaching since 1972. Prior to student teaching they have three weekly microteaching sessions in groups of four to five along with six hours of methods and demonstrations each week. The microteaching experience takes place in the senior year, following 40 hours of school-based observation during the junior year.

Students practice leading critique sessions as well as evaluating their own performance and that of their peers and operating videotaping equipment. For five weeks of the quarter, small peer groups are made up of students with various second languages, so that each student in essence is teaching a group of beginners in his second language. After five weeks, groups are rearranged so that students teach students with the same second language, and they thus practice teaching "advanced classes" for a second five-week period.

Students evaluate each microteaching session, the entire course, and their entire senior-year program at the end of student teaching each year. Ratings of the importance of microteaching in building confidence in student teaching have been uniformly very high. Three years of the program have been completed, and the study is continuing.

Microteaching both with peer and pupil groups has clearly been successful in helping prospective teachers bridge the gap between theory and practice. It must be noted, however, that in no case does microteaching replace observation or participation in school-based activities. Nor does it replace student teaching or internship experiences. Rather, it is an intermediate stage in the following continuum: (1) The student chooses teaching a language as a career. (2) He enrolls in an introductory course which includes a period of work (observation and/or teaching or team-teaching) in a public school. (3) The prospective teacher then enters a methods sequence in which he may have one or more methods courses including microteaching. The microteaching may be done on the campus with peers or with college students, or it may be done in schools with secondary pupils. (4) Finally the student works full-time in a school. The succession of experiences is designed to move the student gradually from full observation to full teaching with as little trauma as possible.

B. Bit teaching, tutoring, or small-group work in college classes. Many institutions have established programs in which prospective language teachers can tutor in university or college classrooms or even team-teach with qualified staff members in such classes at beginning levels. One institution, Utah State University, uses prospective secondary teachers in many functions in an individualized program--as small-group discussion leaders, as tutors, as teachers of structure, as equipment and material monitors. Other institutions allow such work on a more limited scale, such as an "Undergraduate Teaching Assistant" program; such modes are especially common when the methods component of the courses is located within the language department instead of in a school or department of education.

3. Other formats for field-based work. Two other formats will be mentioned briefly, since many institutions use one or the other in some form.

Videotape is used in a number of ways, one of which is in microteaching, as discussed earlier. In addition, prepared videotapes and videotape modules can provide students with an opportunity to observe a number of different kinds of language classrooms. These are especially useful if the college or university is too isolated to provide a variety of experiences in any other way. Such tapes can also be used in conjunction with other field-based experiences, as mentioned earlier.

Supervision in field-based classrooms can be accomplished at some colleges and universities via videotape, especially if microwave links make it possible to tape classes with no disruption. Live classrooms can be beamed via microwave and videotaped for use at any time, or microteaching can be done in school rooms equipped for videotaping and the sessions beamed to the campus for taping and later critique.

Some institutions work with field-based programs which are far removed from the campus--in other countries, to be exact. An example of such a program is one sponsored by the Council for International Educational Exchange (CIEE) in which a consortium of institutions offers opportunities for students to practice teach in English classes in schools in France or Spain. While the program is intended to furnish students their complete student teaching experience, most institutions consider such teaching to be supplementary, since students in such programs do not get experience with the American elementary or secondary school as a social institution or with teaching foreign language to American students. The philosophy of the French or Spanish school is different enough from that of American schools so that there might be very little carry-over from one situation to the other.

What Makes a Good Program of Field-Based Experiences?

Let us for the moment disregard all matters of cost, staffing, and available schools, and design an ideal program for training second language teachers. Such a program would be flexible enough to provide a number of alternative approaches; it would assume that not all students have the same needs or take the same length of time to reach competency and self-confidence. It would not assume that students have to finish their programs in four years. In addition, field-based experiences would not be isolated from other components of the teacher education program. Part of the reason we have done an inadequate job of preparing language teachers in the past is precisely because we have not only isolated the various aspects of the program, but even the staff members themselves.

1. The student has an opportunity to view American education in a number of settings and to consider alternative careers in which he can use his second language background before he enters a teacher education program.

Our hypothetical student has decided that he would like to major in French. He assumes automatically that he has two career choices: either he can continue studying French in graduate school and become a college professor, or he can teach French in a secondary school. This fortunate student, however, goes to an undergraduate advisor in the French Department. After discussing the alternatives, he decides that he will delay a decision until after he has taken a field-based course called "Alternatives in Second Language Careers." The course doesn't offer him many credits, but it promises to expose

him to a number of career choices from which a French major might choose. During the semester, he tutors individuals and small groups of students in beginning French classes at his university. He works for a short time in a Sofitel Hotel (part of a French chain now in the U.S.), where he sees that fields such as public relations, business administration, secretarial work, accounting, food service, art, and design, are filled by persons who speak both French and English and who have other kinds of training as well. He visits the international departments of several large firms in the area, and he visits a number of local schools which have French programs--elementary and secondary schools in inner-city and suburban areas. After considering the career choices open to him, he realizes that to fit into the business world he should really have another major, like business administration, journalism, or design. But he decides that what he <u>really</u> liked was tutoring students and seeing them learn from him. He decides to become a French teacher.

2. The student enters the education program. He has the opportunity to go into a number of schools immediately, either as an observer or a participant.

Even as he takes his "Introduction to Education" course, which is not really a course at all in the traditional sense of the word, he and two other beginning students are placed in a school. The "course" will continue throughout the year during which time he will work as part of a "support group" with a cooperating teacher (or more than one), one or more student teachers who are carrying out their senior internship or student teaching assignments, and a university supervisor. He will work in a school for four to six hours every week all year as he continues other campus-based course-work. Our student has already completed most of his French courses, except for a number of structure courses, and he has spent a year in France.

3. During this one-year introduction to teaching, he has the opportunity to observe and work in schools in several settings, of various sizes, of different types, and with different types of language programs at all levels.

He works for an average of six weeks in each kind of school, becoming a member of a support group in each.

4. Work in the schools is coordinated by a staff which also teaches the on-campus components of his education studies.

He has the opportunity to work with an involved, interested staff consisting of language specialists, education staff, and psychology/counseling personnel presenting a model of cooperative planning and teaching; they guide his observation experiences and help him learn to work effectively with individual pupils and with groups.

5. During his work in schools, he is given guidance to help him determine whether he really has the qualifications of a good language teacher.

He may at any point decide that he does not have the personal qualities for teaching and leave the program without stigma or failing marks on his record.

6. His experiences in the schools are varied.

He spends a considerable amount of time observing, using guidelines discussed in on-campus workshops and observation instruments which he has practiced using with videotapes of actual classrooms on campus.

7. He has opportunities to work with students on a one-to-one basis and in small groups.

He is given responsibility, when he feels ready, for planning and supervising small bits of instruction. He is working, in every case with excellent teachers.

8. On campus he begins to study language teaching methods.

The staff demonstrates specific ways of dealing with introducing a new language, practicing language, or developing free use of language. The student immediately has the opportunity to try his hand at teaching small segments of such lessons to groups of his peers on campus. Some demonstrations and methods components are in prepared videotape modules so that he can work alone or with a small group of students. His own teaching is videotaped, and his peers and the staff help him to evaluate his teaching in constructive critique sessions. At any point he may choose to demonstrate that he has attained certain competencies and move ahead at his own speed.

9. As soon as he is confident that he can carry through a microlesson on campus, he tries it out with a small group of pupils with whom he has been working in the school.

The topic he has chosen to microteach on campus is one he knows he will be asked to work with in an actual school setting; he has thus tried it out as many times as he needs to in order to feel comfortable with the material. He has practiced using a number of alternative methods to teach the same material and selects a method best suited to the level and learning modes of the pupils with whom he is working.

10. In his on-campus group meetings, he spends some time working with group process skills and interpersonal communication techniques.

The psychology/counseling staff members of his group visit him and help him carry out similar activities with the pupils in his school. They observe his interpersonal skills as he works with pupils in tutoring sessions and in informal contacts and guide him in developing his skills.

11. Theory and practice are closely related because the single, unified staff is working with all aspects of his education work.

Our hypothetical prospective French teacher uses what he sees in the schools to help him better visualize theory he is learning.

12. The cooperating teacher in the introductory education program is also the cooperating teacher for a teaching intern; all are part of the "support group" which works with our student in each school.

The cooperating teacher is closely concerned with the total background each of his prospective teachers receives. He is working for an M.A. degree in second language education. He has been chosen because of his ability to relate to college students as equals, because he is an open, non-prescriptive teacher, and because he is willing to work with students.

13. After his one-year introduction to teaching, the student begins working in a single school, where he will continue until he has demonstrated teaching competencies.

He begins when the teachers arrive for fall pre-school workshops so that he can become integrated into the school and the language program from the very beginning. He is accepted as a full partner in the language program.

14. He receives an intensive language methods/microteaching experience as he continues to field-base his microteaching with his pupils.

During the first part of the fall term he works six to ten hours per week in the school. His placement becomes full-time as soon as he is ready, and he gradually assumes full responsibility for teaching. He continues to be a member of the support group and meets weekly with university supervisors and other staff. He helps acclimate beginning education students who are members of his support group as well.

15. He continues until he has demonstrated competency in all areas specified, using self-evaluation and peer and staff evaluation to guide him.

16. He gradually relinquishes some of his responsibilities, and the final portion of his program is campus-based.

A capstone "course," which is still closely coordinated with work in the school, helps him "connect all the pieces" and reflect on his teaching experiences and prospects.

During the entire two-year intensive preparation period, our prospective teacher has had a number of opportunities to connect practice and theory; he has developed a rationale for language study and a philosophy of teaching. He understands children and young people and the psychology of second-language acquisition, and is thus realistic in his expectations for his pupils' progress in language learning. He has developed the ability to work within bureaucratic constraints and tested his ability to deal with other teachers, with administrators, and with parents. He has had an opportunity to work with a group of pupils in a continuous program, so that he has been involved in evaluation as well as in planning and carrying out lessons.

He is aware of the forces for change and innovation in a community; he knows what community services can help him become a more effective teacher. He has developed close ties with university staff members whom he sees as copartners in education. He has developed a positive feeling about working with prospective teachers in his own classrooms in the future. He has continued to develop his understanding of the language he will be teaching; he is familiar with teenagers and can use his knowledge to create a lively, relevant classroom where his pupils can share his excitement about learning the language and discovering the culture of other people. He has learned, finally, to assess his own teaching, to evaluate interaction in his classroom, and to adapt his style to the learning styles of his pupils. He also knows the areas in which he will have to continue to develop as he teaches.

Research

Despite frequent calls for research in teacher education, too little has been forthcoming in the field of second language field-based experiences. Far too often teacher trainers continue to teach as they have always taught and to organize courses as they have been organized in the past, possibly because research evidence supporting innovative teacher preparation methods is lacking.

There is need for research to evaluate methods used to select prospective language teachers. There are no criteria for admittance to the profession, and no research evidence to support the continued admission of all language majors to teacher preparation programs. We do not know with enough precision what a good teacher is, and therefore entrance criteria are difficult to specify.

We need to do follow-up studies of teachers in their classrooms to find out whether they do in fact apply to their teaching what they learned in methods classes, field-based experiences, and student teaching.

We need to continue to explore relationships between institutions of higher education and the public schools. We do not know whether university-based supervision is as effective as or more effective than that provided by public school personnel who are operating as part of a "teacher center" concept.

Finally, there is a need to identify the kinds of general education and methods preparation which produce the open, innovative teachers discussed in this paper, which was written with the assumption that such teachers would in fact result from the programs described.

When we have reliable data concerning these questions, we will be able to specify precisely the kind of program that is needed to train language teachers for tomorrow's schools.

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